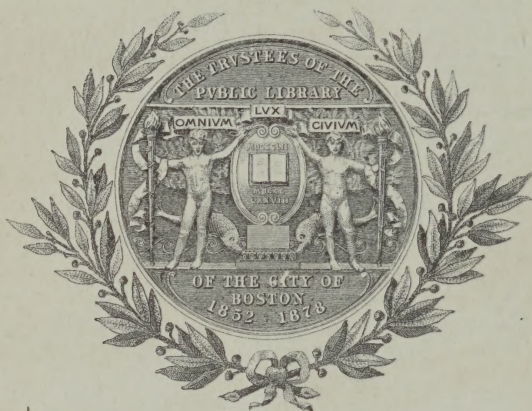


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LETTER
OF
ARCHBISHOP HUGHES
TO BISHOP LYNCH, OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

4265.412

NEW YORK, Aug. 23, 1861.

Right Rev. Dear Sir :—I have received your letter of the 4th inst. How it reached, I can hardly conjecture. But it came to hand within about the usual period required for the transmission of mail matter between Charleston and New York during happier years, when all the States, North and South, found their meaning in the words "*E Pluribus Unum*."

It must have run the blockade or dodged the pickets on hostile borders. I have read it with very deep interest, increased, if anything, by the perils of flood and field through which it must have passed.

If even the innocent lightning of the North were permitted to carry a message into Southern latitudes, I would telegram you for permission to publish your calm and judicious communication. As it is, however, my only chance of acknowledging it is through the Metropolitan Record, and without special permission publish your letter at the same time. In this way it may happen that, during the war or afterwards, my answer will come under your inspection. Yours is, in my judgment, one of the most temperate views of the present unhappy contest that has ever come under my notice from any son of South Carolina. It is not to be inferred, however, that because I admire so much the calmness of its tone and temper, I therefore agree with all its arguments and speculations.

You say I am "reported to have spoken strongly against the war policy of the Government of the United States, as fraught with much present suffering, and not calculated to obtain any real advantage." Be assured that, previous to the outbreak of military violence, I was most ardently desirous of preserving peace and union; but, since violence, battle and bloodshed have occurred, I dare not hope for peace unless you can show me a foundation of rock or solid ground (but no quicksand basis) on which peace can be re-established. The nature of your ministry and mine necessarily implies that we should be the friends of peace. It was the special legacy of our Divine Master to his flock. And it would be strange if we, His appointed ministers, should be found in the ranks of its enemies. His words were, as we find in St. John, "Peace I leave to you, my peace I give to you." And yet St. Paul, in writing to the Christian converts of Rome, says: "If it be possible, as much as it is in you, have peace with all men." I think this latter inspired quotation has at least a remote bearing on our present sad difficulties.

Your explanations of the causes which have led to this war are entirely Southern in their premises and conclusions. But they are so vividly, and even plausibly stated, that I leave them uncontroverted. Your description of the evils resulting from the war is too correct to be gainsayed by me. Still, here we are in the midst of a sanguinary contest, which, so far as I can see, like a hurricane on the ocean, must exhaust its violence before we can expect the return of national calm. There is no one who desires more ardently than I do the advent of that bright day on which we shall all be reunited in one great prosperous country.

Instead of controverting the correctness of your views in regard to the causes of our actual troubles, or determining where or on whom the responsibility of their existence rests, I shall beg leave to make my own statement from a point of view which is found in the general sentiment of the people North of Mason and Dixon's Line.

They say that, whatever may have been the anterior origin of this war, its immediate cause was the overt act of turning guns, put in place by the State of South Carolina, against a public military defence of the country at large, which of right belonged to all the States in common. Then it is thought, or at least stated, in these quarters, that the South for many years past would not be satisfied with less than a paramount control of the National Government. The South, it is well known, has been in a fretful mood for many years under Northern assaults, made upon her civil and domestic institutions. It would be, on my part, very uncandid to disguise the conviction that in this respect

the South has had much reason to complain. Leaving, however, opinions to fluctuate as they may, I will simply give you my own as to the primary causes of our present strife.

You know that free speech and a free press are essential constituents of the first notions of Anglo-Saxon liberty. These were the shibboleth of its existence, prosperity and prospects. In the exercise of these peculiar privileges the North of this country has used its type and its tongue offensively against the South. Neither was the South backward in the work of retaliation on the same principle. But the Anglo-Saxon, whether of the South or of the North, would see the whole world set in a blaze rather than put limits to the freedom of the press or the unbridled license of the tongue, except when the laws interpose for the protection of public authority or individual rights of character and property.

At the commencement of our National institution as an independent State, slavery, for instance, was found to exist, almost universally, in the North as well as in the South. The word itself was not used in any of the paragraphs found in the Magna Charta of our Government. The slave-trade from the Western Coast of Africa had been encouraged by the subjects and the Government of Great Britain. The Government of England did not hesitate to affix its veto on some of the enactments made by the recognized local authorities of the Colonies for the diminution of the slave-trade. It would appear that from this trade, so abominable in its primary origin, there were certain emoluments accruing to the treasury of the mother country. And these emoluments were looked to as a source of revenue, just as some countries in Europe, in their sovereign capacity, monopolize the largest portion of profits resulting from commerce in salt and tobacco.

After the Revolution, slavery was gradually dispensed with in all the Northern States. Whether this was done from what would now appear a sense of humanity, or from motives of domestic or political lucre, it will be for you, as for me, a private right to determine, each according to his own opinion. But slavery was a social element, recognized in all the States at the period of the Revolution. So far the changes that have supervened in reference to slavery has been all in the North, and the South is to-day as to this matter in *statu quo* just as she was at the period of the Declaration of Independence. The Northern States, in the exercise of their acknowledged right, repudiated slavery within their own borders. The Southern States, in their equal exercise of theirs, have done just the reverse. The North, unrepenting of many sins of its own, has exhibited great remorse for the sins of its neighbors. A portion of its inhabitants talk in a certain style, not only of this subject, but of a great many others about national sins which, according to its solution of Pagan ethics or of Christian duty, every human being is bound to correct. Yet the biggest sin in our day known to the North is not what occurs in its own immediate neighborhood or State, but the monster iniquity of the South, which, between you and me, and as the world goes, might have been permitted to manage its own affairs in its own way, so that its acts should be found either in harmony with, or not in violation of, the Constitution of the United States.

I am an advocate for the sovereignty of every State in the Union within the limits recognized and approved of by its own representative authority when the Constitution was agreed upon. As a consequence I hold that South Carolina has no State right to interfere with the internal affairs of Massachusetts. And as a further consequence, that Massachusetts has no right to interfere with South Carolina, or its domestic and civil affairs, as one of the sovereign States of this now threatened Union. But the Constitution having been adopted by the common consent of all the sovereign parties engaged in the frame-work and approval thereof, I maintain that no State has a right to secede, except in the manner provided for in the document itself.

The revolt of the Colonies against the authority of Great Britain is another thing. If England had extended to these Colonies the common rights and privileges nominally secured by the British Constitution, we have high authority for believing that the Colonies would not have gone, at least when they did, into rebellion. Indeed, it might be asserted and maintained that it was not the Americans, but the British Ministry and Government, that supplied legitimate reasons for the American Revolution.

In the present case it would be difficult by parity of reasoning, to justify the grounds on which the South have acted.

I think a few remarks will satisfy you of the correctness of this statement. You say that for many years the South has proclaimed its dissatisfaction, and announced its determined purpose of Secession if certain complaints should not be attended to and their causes redressed; that the South was always in earnest, and the North would never believe in their sincerity or their predictions. This may be so; but it gives me an occasion to remark that the National Government, as such, had no special reason for the Secession of the South at this time more than there was ten or fifteen years ago. The Personal Liberty bill was unconstitutional in the few States which adopted it. New York was too wise and too patriotic to be caught in that trap. The so-called Personal Liberty bill was never adopted, so far as documents are evidence, either directly or indirectly, by the Government at Washington. Indeed I am not aware of any statute passed by the National authority which could give the South additional reasons for discontent or complaint within the last ten or fifteen years.

I have thus alluded to the unofficial causes for Southern resentment. Even in yo

own letter the cause alleged is the election of the Chief Magistrate. This does not seem at all sufficient to warrant the course which the South has adopted.

The Government originally agreed upon by all the States has lasted during a period of between seventy and eighty years. During this time its executive administration was enjoyed by the South for fifty-two years. No Northern President has ever been re-elected. Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe and Jackson, have each discharged that office for a term of eight years. The conclusion is, then, that out of seventy or eighty years of the administration of our Government, fifty-two years have enured to our patriotic men of the South. This fact involves the potentialities and powers of the Government as having been exercised by supremacy on the part of the South. The Navy, the Army, the incumbents of the Supreme Court, were not ignorant of or insensible to this fact. Now I put it to your candor to say whether, after such a history of the administration of our country, the South might not have tolerated the occupancy of the Presidential chair by the present incumbent, who, with his Northern predecessors in that office, could hardly expect to survive officially the ordinary four years of a Northern Supreme Magistrate?

You say that President Lincoln was elected by Black Republicans in the North. I am inclined to think that he was indirectly or negatively elected by Democrats North and South. The Black Republicans presented one candidate, and in order to defeat his election, the Democrats, North and South, presented *three*. If the latter had selected only one candidate, it is probable that the Black Republicans, as you call them, would have been found as *minus habentes*. But when the Democrats distributed their votes, apparently with a view of rendering them inefficient, then, of course, the one man of choice was elected over the three candidates and competitors that had been placed in rivalry with each other, and in the aggregate all against him alone. That he was constitutionally elected under these circumstances is not denied either in the South or in the North. Then, if so elected, he is the Chief Magistrate of all the United States of America, and, by his very oath of office, is bound by their own common consent to see that neither Maine, on the northeast, nor Texas, on the southwest, shall be permitted to overthrow the original National compact agreed upon in the Constitution of this Government. If States shall be allowed, in face of that National Constitution, to kick over the traces of a common union, as agreed upon in the primitive days of our Government, then it is difficult to see why counties and townships and villages may not be at liberty to do the same thing just as often as the freak or fancy to do so may or shall have come upon them.

There appears to be an idea in the South that the National Government and the people of the North are determined to conquer and subjugate them. This, I think, is a great mistake. First, in the sterner sense of the word "conquer," it seems to me utterly impossible; and, if possible, I think it would be undesirable and injurious both to the North and to the South. Unless I have been deceived by statements considered reliable, I would say that the mind of the North looks only to the purpose of bringing back the Seceded States to their organic condition—*ante bellum*.

There remains now scarcely a hope of peace, and the issue is apparently that the North must triumph on the field of Mars, or that the South shall prove itself victorious on the same bloody arena. But, after all, we must not despair in reference to a coming peace. The idea of an armistice, even for six months, is now utterly hopeless, but I think that the North, if the chance were presented, would be as willing to enter on terms of peace as the South itself. Still, I am bound to say, under deep conviction of the truth, that, of both sections unhappily launched on the swelling torrent of our domestic troubles, the North will be the latter to sink or swim in the sanguinary tide on which both are now afloat.

You make mention of the Commissioners sent to Washington at an early period of the struggle, with kind, fair and liberal propositions, as you consider them, for the arrangement of the whole difficulty. Before reaching the point of settlement there would be found a vast amount of principle involved. Commissioners should have some recognized authority to warrant them in attempting to discharge the duties of their official office. Those of the South, in the circumstances, so far as I can see, had no authority whatever.

The people of your region (when I say people, of course I mean the voters, as commonly understood in this country,) had scarcely been consulted on this vital question. Their Government, so called, was unrecognized by any civil principality on the face of the earth. Commissioners presented themselves before the public servants of a Government universally recognized by all nations. The terms of these Southern Commissioners were more of dictation than of petition. The Government at Washington had to choose one or another of two alternatives. The President and his Cabinet might have chosen the alternative of perjury, and acceded to the demands of those Commissioners, or they might, as they surely did, decline every official intercourse with them.

They chose the latter course. And now it only remains to see whether the Government is what it calls itself—the Government of the United States, or merely the Government of a fraction thereof—and that fraction measured out to them by Southern Commissioners who could not show a legitimate title for the commission which they professed to execute.

You think it hard and unnatural that foreigners and Catholics should be deluded into the service of the recognized National Government in order to be immolated in the front of battles and made food for Southern powder. If this end were a deliberate policy in the North, I should scout and despise it. I admit and maintain that foreigners now naturalized, whether Catholics or not, ought to bear their relative burden in defence of the only country on those shores which they have recognized and which has recognized them, as citizens of the United States.

Mr. Russell, the correspondent of the London Times, reports a conversation which he had with "a very intelligent Southern gentleman, formerly editor of a newspaper," who stated, on behalf of the Confederacy—"Well, sir, when things are settled, we'll just take the law into our own hands. Not a man shall have a vote unless he's American born, and by degrees we'll get rid of these men who disgrace us." Mr. Russell inquired, "Are not many of your regiments composed of Germans and Irish, of foreigners, in fact?" "Yes, sir."

This very "intelligent Southern gentleman, formerly editor of a newspaper," is certainly no true representative of the gentleman whom it was my good fortune and pleasure to meet whenever I traveled in the South. But no matter. If the statement be true, it only shows that for Irish and foreigners in general, the South is nearly as unfriendly as the North can be. It proves further, that so far as the Irish are concerned, the hereditary calamities of their native land follow them up wherever they go, in one form or another. Here, and now, they are called upon by both sides to fight in the battles of the country; and no matter who triumphs, they need not look for large expressions of thanks or gratitude from either side. Still, whether in peace or war, take them for all in all, they are as true to the country as if they had been born on its once free and happy soil.

Pardon me this digression, and let me return to the other sentiment touching the hope of a prospective peace.

That word "peace" is becoming more or less familiar here in the North. In a crisis like this it is not, in my opinion, expressive of a sound principle or a safe policy. Its meaning changes the basis and the issues of this melancholy war. If changed, it will be a war, not between the South and the North, geographically considered, but a war between the two great political parties that divide the country. Instead of this partisan hostility, wise patriots should rival each other in restoring or preserving the Union as one nation, its prosperity, and the protection and happiness of its entire people, in all their legitimate rights. But all this is to be judged of by others, and the opinion of any individual is of the smallest account. If a word of mine could have the slightest influence, I would suggest that, even while the war is going on, their might be a Convention of the Seceded States, held within their own borders. It might be one representative appointed from each of those States, by the Governor, to meet and examine the whole case as it now stands, and arrange and draw up a report of their grievances, or what they consider such, and report to their several Governors the result of their deliberations, and the conclusions at which they shall have arrived.

The same process might be adopted in the States that have not seceded, and similar reports be made to their respective Governors. This would be only a preparatory measure for something more important. If a better feeling, or understanding, could be even partially arrived at, a future Convention of all the States by their representatives would have something to act upon. The difficulties might be investigated and provided for; the Constitution might be revised by general consent, and if the platform—sufficiently ample for 3,000,000 at the period when the Constitution was formed—is found to be neither of breadth or strength to support a population of 33,000,000, wise and patriotic men might suggest, according to the rules prescribed in the original document, the improvements which the actual condition of the country would seem to require. The Constitution itself, in its letter and spirit, is, no doubt, the same as it was when first framed; but everything around has been undergoing a change for nearly eighty years.

For a peace of that kind I would be a very sincere, if not an influential, advocate. But to expect that a peace will spring up by the advocacy of individuals in the midst of the din and clash of arms, amidst the mutually alienated feelings of the people, and the widening of the breach which has now separated them, would be, in my opinion, hoping against hope. Still, we must trust that the Almighty will overrule and direct the final issues of this lamentable contest.

I had no intention to write so long a response to your kind letter. Enough, and perhaps more than enough, has been said, and it only remains for me to add that the Catholic faith and Catholic charity which unites us in the spiritual order shall remain unbroken by the booming of cannon along the lines that unfortunately separate a great and once prosperous community into two hostile portions, each arrayed in military strife against the other.

I have the honor to remain, as ever,
Your obedient serv't and Brother in Christ,

†JOHN, *Archbishop of New York.*

RT. REV. P. N. LYNCH, *Bishop of Charleston.*

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